

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L TANANARIVE 1306

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TAGS: PGOV, MA

SUBJECT: NEW PRIME MINISTER RAKOTONIAINA AND WHAT IT MAY
MEAN FOR US

REF: TANANARIVE 1299

SUMMARY. RAKOTONIAINA IS INTELLIGENT, REALISTIC, PRAGMATIC, FORCEFUL, AND KNOWN FOR HIS LEADERSHIP QUALITIES. IDEOLOGICALLY, HE APPEARS TO BE AN OPPORTUNIST. HE IS EXPECTED TO GIVE POSITIVE DIRECTION TO THE GOVERNMENT AND PERHAPS WILL BE ABLE TO REDUCE SOME OF RATSIRAKA'S EXCESSES. THIS MAY MEAN, IN NUANCED TERMS, A BETTER BREAK FOR WESTERN INTERESTS, BUT TIME WILL TELL. HE PROBABLY HAS SUPPORT OF THE MILITARY WHOSE OVERALL POWER MAY HAVE BEEN REDUCED. ONLY DARK SPOT ON HORIZON IS POSSIBLE CONFLICT BETWEEN RATSIRAKA'S AND RAKOTONIAINA'S STRONG PERSONALITIES. END SUMMARY.

1. JUSTIN RAKOTONIAINA, NEW PRIME MINISTER OF MADAGASCAR, HAS BEEN A PUBLIC FIGURE ONLY SINCE 1973. HE IS DESCRIBED AS "EXTREMELY INTELLIGENT," "A REALIST" AND A "PRAGMATIST" BY VIRTUALLY EVERYONE WHO KNOWS HIM WELL. HE IS ALSO KNOWN FOR BEING FORCEFUL AND FOR HIS LEADERSHIP QUALITIES.

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2. AS A CHILD, HE WAS ORPHANED EARLY AND RAISED BY GOD-PARENTS WHO WERE NOT IN VERY GOOD CIRCUMSTANCES, AND ONE SOURCE TOLD US THAT HE HAD TO GO BAREFOOT UNTIL HE ENTERED HIGH SCHOOL. HE WAS A SERIOUS STUDENT AND WELL RESPECTED IN UNIVERSITY CIRCLES BEFORE HE WAS "DISCOVERED" BY PRESIDENT RATSIRAKA (THEN FOREIGN MINISTER) IN 1973 WHEN HE PARTICIPATED IN FRENCH-MALAGASY AID NEGOTIATIONS. IMPRESSED, RATSIRAKA MADE HIM AMBASSADOR TO ALGERIA A FEW MONTHS AFTER THE NEGOTIATIONS ENDED, AND THEN SELECTED HIM IN 1975 TO BE MINISTER OF EDUCATION WHEN RATSIRAKA TOOK POWER.

3. TO SOME OBSERVERS, RAKOTONIAINA IS SOMEWHAT OF AN OPPORTUNIST. HE WAS A MEMBER OF TSIRANANA'S OLD SOCIALIST PARTY BEFORE 1971, BEING IN THE ANDRE RESAMPA (OR LEFT-OF-CENTER) WING. HE IS NOW A MEMBER OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL OF AREMA, RATSIRAKA'S NEW (SINCE MARCH) POLITICAL ORGANIZATION, WHICH IS BEING ORGANIZED IN ALL THE PROVINCES. IN ANY EVENT, RAKOTONIAINA APPEARS TO FOLLOW PREVAILING TENDENCIES BUT IS NOT KNOWN FOR ANY IDEOLOGICAL DEPARTURES OF HIS OWN.

4. RAKOTONIAINA'S ELEVATION TO PM MAY BE A SIGNIFICANT ALTERATION OF THE GOVERNMENT. FIRST, A CIVILIAN, RATHER THAN A MILITARY MAN, IS PRIME MINISTER. SECOND, THIS GIVES THE SUPREME REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL (CSR), IF IT IS NOT FURTHER ALTERED, EIGHT CIVILIANS TO SIX MILITARY. THIRD, THE NEW PM HAS A MUCH STRONGER PERSONALITY THAN THE LATE PM, RAKOTOMALALA, AND DESPITE DISCLAIMERS HE MADE UPON HIS NOMINATION, HE IS EXPECTED TO TAKE MORE OF A ROLE IN DIRECTING THE GOVERNMENT.

5. REGARDING THE LATTER, IT HAD BEEN RUMORED, FOLLOWING RAKOTOMALALA'S DEATH, THAT OVER THE PAST FEW WEEKS OR MONTHS, RAKOTOMALALA AND RATSIRAKA HAD HAD SEVERAL ARGUMENTS CONCERNING RAKOTOMALALA'S FEELINGS THAT HE WAS BEING CUT OUT OF DECISION MAKING. WE HAVE NOW SUBSTANTIATED THAT, SINCE APRIL, RATSIRAKA HAD PREVENTED MEETINGS OF THE CABINET BEING HELD UNDER THE PM; ONLY MEETINGS HELD WERE THOSE OF THE CSR PLUS THE CABINET CHAIRED BY RATSIRAKA HIMSELF. ONE OF RAKOTOMALALA'S OTHER COMPLAINTS TO RATSIRAKA CENTERED AROUND CONFIDENTIAL

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NATIONALIZATIONS THAT HAVE TAKEN PLACE RECENTLY WHICH RAKOTOMALALA FIRST HEARD ABOUT VIA THE PRESS: ORDERS FOR THE NATIONALIZATIONS WERE GIVEN DIRECTLY BY RATSIRAKA TO RAKOTOMALALA'S MINISTERS.

6. WITH RAKOTONIAINA'S STRONGER PERSONALITY, HIS DEMONSTRATED ADMINISTRATIVE ABILITY, AND HIS INTELLECTUAL CAPACITY, THE SEEDS FOR CONFLICT BETWEEN RATSIRAKA AND

RAKOTONIAINA ARE QUITE APPARENT. MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS, A FEW KEY EDITORS AND SENIOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS WHO KNOW RAKOTONIAINA EXUDE CONFIDENCE THAT, ASIDE FROM ANY POTENTIAL CONFLICT WITH RATSIRAKA, RAKOTONIAINA WILL GIVE THE GOVERNMENT POSITIVE DIRECTION THAT IT NEEDS. THESE OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT THE POWER OF THE CSR AND RATSIRAKA'S PALACE GUARD (HIS PERSONAL COUNSELORS AND THOSE OF THE CSR, ALL OF WHOM HAVE REPORTEDLY PLAYED KEY ROLES IN DECISION MAKING) WILL HENCEFORTH BE REDUCED. AS A REALIST AND A PRAGMATIST, RAKOTONIAINA IS EXPECTED TO PREVENT FURTHER EROSION OF THE POSITION OF WESTERN COUNTRIES HERE, BUT THAT OF COURSE REMAINS TO BE SEEN.

7. RAKOTONIAINA'S APPOINTMENT WILL PROBABLY HAVE FULL SUPPORT OF THE MILITARY, WITH POSSIBLE EXCEPTION OF ONE OR TWO MILITARY MEMBERS OF CSR WHO MAY FORESEE REDUCTION IN THEIR OWN PEROGATIVES. AS A WHOLE, MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT IS ANXIOUS TO KEEP OUT OF POLITICS, BUT RECOGNIZES THAT ULTIMATE STRENGTH OF ANY MALAGASY GOVERNMENT DEPENDS ON MAINTAINING SUPPORT OF THE MILITARY.

8. ASKED BY REPORTERS AFTER HIS NOMINATION ABOUT THE PRESENCE OF TWO STRONG PERSONALITIES (HIS AND RATSIRAKA'S) IN THE GOVERNMENT, RAKOTONIAINA REPLIED: "FOR ME, THE BOSS IS PRESIDENT RATSIRAKA. ACCORDING TO THE TERMS OF THE CONSTITUTION, THE GOVERNMENT IS AN EXECUTIVE ORGAN. WE HAVE TO EXECUTE ORDERS. AS FOR MY JOB AS COORDINATOR, I DO NOT THINK THERE IS A RISK OF CONFLICT. I WILL RECEIVE ORDERS FROM THE PRESIDENT. I WILL TAKE INITIATIVES AS THEY CONCERN THE EXECUTION." REPLYING TO A QUESTION ABOUT THE COUNTRY'S SHORT-TERM PRIORITIES, RAKOTONIAINA LISTED ONLY RICE PRODUCTION, RESTRUCTURING OF THE NATIONAL EDUCATION

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TIONAL SYSTEM, AND INCREASING OVERALL PRODUCTION TO ASSURE SELF-SUFFICIENCY WHEREVER POSSIBLE.

9. RATSIRAKA'S CHOICE AS THE NEW PM MAY HAVE BEEN A SAFE BET FOR HIM, SINCE RAKOTONIAINA, FROM ALL INDICATIONS, HAS VIRTUALLY NO ENEMIES EITHER WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT OR WITHOUT AND IS WELL RESPECTED. HE MAY BE THE MAN TO RECHARGE THE POTENTIALLY CAPABLE CABINET (FOR THE MOST PART), ASSUMING THAT ALL OR MOST WILL REMAIN IN THEIR CURRENT POSITIONS. MOREOVER, HE IS THE FIRST EXPERIENCED ADMINISTRATOR TO TAKE OVER ONE OF THE TWO KEY FUNCTIONS IN THE COUNTRY SINCE TSIRANANA'S OUSTER IN 1972. WHETHER THERE IS A CONFLICT BETWEEN RATSIRAKA AND RAKOTONIAINA REMAINS TO BE SEEN; RATSIRAKA COULD BENEFIT FROM AN ACTIVE, WELL-DIRECTED PM, EVEN IF IT MEANS A PARTIAL SLOWING OF THE SOCIALIST REVOLUTION. HOWEVER,

A LOT DEPENDS ON OTHER PRESSURES ON RATSIRAKA FROM BOTH
INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL POLITICAL FORCES.SHEINBAUM

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